

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 AID-05
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /097 W
-----091605 221908Z /40

R 211538Z OCT 77
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9287
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USSOUTHCOM SCJ-2
USCOMSOLANT

S E C R E T PRETORIA 5652

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1, 3
TAGS: MPOL, PGOV, AR, UY, SF
SUBJECT: SPECULATION OVER A SOUTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

REF: MONTEVIDEO 4835

1. THE EMBASSY HAS NO CURRENT INFORMATION ON URUGUAYAN-SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS THAT WOULD INDICATE THE LATTER IS "COURTING" URUGUAY NOR ARE WE AWARE OF ANY SAG "POLITICAL FIGURES" VISITING THERE. (SEE REFTEL).
2. DAO PRETORIA, WHILE HAVING NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON THE URUGUAYAN CONNECTION, HAS WHAT IT CONSIDERS RELIABLE INFORMATION THAT INDICATES A SIGNIFICANT MILITARY LIAISON BETWEEN SEVERAL SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES AND THE SAG, TO INCLUDE UNDERCOVER MILITARY ATTACHES RESIDENT IN PRETORIA FROM CHILE AND PROBABLY BRAZIL. THEY ARE ALSO AWARE THAT ARGENTINA AND THE SAG HAVE IN THE PAST EXCHANGED INTELLIGENCE ON COMMUNIST

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SHIP MOVEMENTS IN THE SOUTHERN ATLANTIC.

3. COMMENT. WE WOULD NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN COOPERATION WITH URUGUAY AND POSSIBLY OTHERS ON DEFENSE MATTERS. THE SAG AT PRESENT SEES ITSELF AS BETRAYED BY THE WESTERN WORLD AND THREATENED BY THE COMMUNIST WORLD. IT IS CASTING ABOUT FOR FRIENDS AND WOULD BE ATTRACTED

BY SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF A SOUTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE AS
IN THE MUTUAL STRATEGIC INTEREST OF SOUTH AFRICA AND SOUTH
AMERICANS. END COMMENT.

4. REGARDING QUESTION OF CREDITS, WE AGAIN HAVE LITTLE
SPECIFIC INFORMATION. HOWEVER, SOUTH AFRICA ROUTINELY
PROVIDES TRADE CREDITS FOR ITS EXPORTS ON MANUFACTURED
GOODS. WE NOTE THAT SOUTH AFRICAN STATISTICS SHOW EXPORTS
TO URUGUAY JUMPED FROM R348,000 IN 1975 TO R3.3 MILLION
IN 1976 (RAND EQUALS \$1.15), VIRTUALLY ALL IN MACHINERY
AND MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS. FIGURES FOR THE FIRST FIVE
MONTHS OF 1977 SHOW ALREADY EXPORTS OF R4.0 MILLION,
AGAIN OVERWHELMINGLY IN MANUFACTURED GOODS. IT IS QUITE
LIKELY THAT MOST OF THESE EXPORTS WERE COVERED BY REGULAR
SOUTH AFRICAN EXPORT CREDITS. BEYOND EXPORT CREDITS,
WE CANNOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF SMALL POLITICALLY-
MOTIVATED LOANS. HOWEVER, SOUTH AFRICAN BUDGET IS
UNDER PRESSURE DUE TO DOMESTIC RECESSION AND REDUCTION
IN AVAILABILITY OF FOREIGN CAPITAL. WE THEREFORE DOUBT
THAT S.A. IS IN POSITION TO PROVIDE NON-EXPORT LOANS OF
ANY REAL SIGNIFICANCE TO AN ECONOMY LIKE URUGUAY'S.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COLLECTIVE SECURITY AGREEMENTS, REGIONAL DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Oct-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PRETOR05652
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG IS ALSO X3
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770390-0139
Format: TEL
From: PRETORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771033/aaaabbzi.tel
Line Count: 84
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8db29c29-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 MONTEVIDEO 4835
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 830331
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SPECULATION OVER A SOUTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION
TAGS: MPOL, PGOV, AR, UY, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8db29c29-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009